

Appendix IV

Comparison to the CEIS/EMPACT Meetings

The CEIS/EMPACT national groups included experience with participants from the same stakeholder groups as several Region III groups, e.g. small environmental organizations, environmental educators, and small business groups. The Region III librarians and media groups were unique and give an important perspective for understanding these vital stakeholders. Individual group interests are highlighted in the individual summary documents.

There is an overall “high tech/ high touch” trend in the national Phase III groups. Participants understand that the Internet and other “high tech” options are a vital addition to current and future information resources. However, they universally agree that these “high tech” options need to have a “high touch” element — people connected to them. For example, frequently participants across the national groups mention that they would like to be able to get to a person more quickly when they are trying to find information through a Web site or a phone number.

Environmental Organizations

Environmental organizations share a number of comments in the Region III and the national groups in Portland, Maine, and San Francisco, California. The groups agree that they need to find the correct people to contact to get information. These contacts become an indispensable part of their information acquisition network.

The national groups tend to look to the Internet to provide some of the “high tech” solutions they seek. The Region III group is less Web-focussed and contend that, in addition to the “high tech” approach, the EPA needs to ensure that its publications continue and that references are available to identify resources. The Region III group indicates that smaller, more rurally located organizations may not have Internet capabilities and need to rely on contacts and published information to function. The Portland group agrees with this concern, urging EPA *not* to assume that everyone has a computer; EPA should use a variety of media to reach its stakeholders.

One interesting difference between the groups is that the Region III group has substantially lower average Internet access than the other groups. In fact, they have the lowest level of Internet access of all the Region III and national groups. This group offers a prime example of the population of environmental organizations with limited resources to rely upon for their information needs.

Small Business

The Region III business group included representatives of small and medium sized businesses. This differed slightly from the national public meetings, which included representatives from several larger companies and agencies. The most apparent, different priority for the Region III small business participants was a much larger focus on regulatory information and related financial burdens. The small business owners repeatedly returned to a variety of regulatory concerns including clearly understanding regulations, identifying appropriate regulations, establishing

appropriate compliance measures, and the cost of compliance. In this respect, Region III small business participants agreed strongly with agricultural stakeholders meetings convened by CEIS/EMPACT in Fort Collins, Colorado and Kansas City, Missouri. In contrast, the representatives of larger companies did not share the same level of concern.

Like other groups, these groups found similarities in their desire for “high tech/high touch” response to their information needs. Both groups were looking for more ways of getting information, more pro-active information distribution by EPA, more methods of information acquisition, and more people to provide information and interpretation of regulations.

Environmental Educators

The Region III and national educator groups differ in their make-up. The Region III group consists of only educators, whereas the national group includes both teachers and administrators. The national group also includes representatives from Washington, D.C. based educational advocacy organizations. These differences in participants result in strong differences between the two groups. The Administrators in the CEIS/EMPACT group express concerns related to their institutions being in compliance with EPA regulations. In contrast, the educators in the Region III group have none of these concerns; they are primarily classroom teachers.

The teachers in both groups agree that there is a need for interpretation of data, technical and expert support, and easy-to-reach contacts to support their educational efforts and curriculum development. The teachers in both groups are in agreement over the need for educational products and interpreted data for curriculum development. The groups also seek ways to contact EPA’s technical staff and other scientists involved in research so that they can ask questions and get explanations of data they encounter. These contacts are important to teachers to tap the raw data and add expertise to EPA data collections and resources. They are also interested in technical support for field trips and data-gathering work done by students. In addition, both groups of teachers are in search of contact rituals to improve their networks and have on-going contact to be aware of changes and improvements from EPA.